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AUTHOR Neumann, William
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ABSTRACT

Six generalizations are offered regarding the collective requirements and expectations that colleges and universities impose on, or expect of, their students. (1) Colleges and universities in varying degrees expect and require students to demonstrate "basic academic skills" in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students must also learn how to adopt the professor's point of view. (2) Schools have given students considerable autonomy, thus expecting students to exhibit "self-sufficiency" with regard to managing time and to be able to learn through self-instruction. (3) Students must have a high level of "sociability" to get along with their peers as well as with the faculty. (4) Colleges and professors assume a certain and sustaining degree of "motivation"; professors do not feel it is their duty to interest the student. (5) Research indicates that those students with clearly defined goals and a sense of "direction" are more likely to persist and attain a college degree. (6) Colleges and universities require students to pay for their education; those students with "financial security" will study more effectively. (JM)

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COLLEGE PRESS AND STUDENT FIT

William Neumann
Syracuse University
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College Press and Student Fit

What do colleges require of students today? Specifically, the answer to this question is, it depends! It depends on which college or university a student attends, what their major field of study is, who their teachers are, who the other students are, and, finally, on the student himself and what kind of person he is. Answering this question specifically then, is not easy, but answering it generally is not much easier. The safest generalization one can make about the American system of higher education is that it is large and diverse. Of course everyone knows that, but it's not until one looks closely at this system that they can begin to appreciate its true dimensions and variety.

In 1980 twelve million students were enrolled in three thousand two hundred and fifty-three different colleges and universities. Five hundred thousand professors taught two million classes preparing students for some fifteen hundred different degrees.

The three thousand two hundred and fifty-three institutions of higher education differ in a number of significant ways, all of which may effect what they require of students. There are four year and two-year colleges, church affiliated and nonsectarian schools, coeducational and single-sex schools. There are residential and commuter schools; urban, suburban and rural colleges. There are liberal arts schools, technical schools, state colleges, graduate schools, teacher's colleges, community colleges, research universities and multiuniversities. They all may differ dramatically in cost, selectivity, reputation, prestige, age, history, tradition, wealth and stability. There are often clear differences in student bodies and faculties and profound differences in curriculum and educational philosophies.

Within these many sundry institutions the faculties too differ in a number of ways which have a direct effect on how they teach and what they consequently require of students. Faculty may be tenured or untenured, of junior or senior rank, and depending on their rank they are either secure and confident or insecure and anything but confident. College faculty usually are hired for their expertise in their subject area and not their teaching ability or experience. Some (many) faculty are notoriously ineffective and boring teachers, and others are great teachers, and still others are great researchers, some are both, and others, unfortunately, are neither. All too often promotion is awarded on the basis of research, and many faculty are under great pressure to publish and as a result neglect their teaching. Some senior faculty resent and avoid teaching introductory and undergraduate courses, preferring to teach graduate courses more closely related to their current research interests. George Wald, the Nobel Prize winning Harvard biologist, claims that he is the first professor in his department's history to volunteer to teach the freshman introductory course. Wald explains that this distinction was customarily visited upon the relatively defenseless junior faculty. It has been suggested that junior and community college faculty--often taken from the ranks of high school faculties--are more effective teachers of undergraduates because they have teaching experience,and because they are not under pressure to publish.

We can also point to very obvious differences in subject areas which require very different skills from students. Literature, humanities and social studies majors will almost certainly be called upon to read more

than hard science majors, while the latter will most likely need more highly developed quantitative skills.

The composition of the student body, whether its heterogeneous or homogeneous, and the nature of its interactions with the institution will certainly effect what is required of them. At most colleges the student body is steadily becoming more diverse. Minority student enrollment has increased, and extensive government supported financial aid programs have allowed greater numbers of working-class students to enroll in college. Last year, for the first time in our history more women than men were enrolled in institutions of higher education. The popular image of the typical college student as being between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two, attending college full-time and maybe working part-time is also changing. Fully forty percent of that twelve million students enrolled last year were part-time students, and many of them were working full-time. College administrators and faculty realize that they simply can not expect the same level of involvement of a married student with children, working a full-time job and attending school part-time as they have of the 'traditional' student. There are night schools, extension programs, and week-end colleges. The independent study degree program of Syracuse University offers a variety of masters degrees that only call for two weeks residence on campus each year, and Adelphi University offers an MBA to commuters who ride the train and take classes on their way to and from work each day.

Given the astonishing variation both between and within our many institutions of higher education, and given that for almost any general statement I might make about these institutions there is certain to be

an obvious exception, let me offer some tentative generalizations regarding the collective requirements and expectations imposed on and expected of students (intended and unintended) by virtue of the common character and nature of contemporary colleges and universities.

Much of my thinking on this topic has been influenced by the work of Gerald Grant and David Riesman, especially their award winning study, The Perpetual Dream: Reform and Experiment in the American College. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). Based upon over seven years of fieldwork at more than four hundred colleges and universities--including intensive visits to thirty campuses--their findings indicate that several important changes have taken place in the character of higher education since the upheavals of the 1960s:

> While both individual students and institutions have been unevenly affected by these changes, there is no doubt that almost everywhere requirements have been relaxed, the paths toward a degree have been made more multiple and open, and the gold standard of academic currency (in some cases more nominal than real) has been diluted by grade inflation. . . . Requirements evaporated either piecemeal or through large-scale demolition. Open admissions, always a reality in many state universities and colleges, became a political issue when it implied recruiting of, and providing academic enrichment for, minorities who possessed what would hitherto have been deemed inadequate high school preparation. Parietal regulations disappeared with such astonishing speed that it is a surprise to come upon a college that still forbids co-residential living and thus defends what students would regard as hypocrisy. (Grant and Riesman, 1979, p. 181.)

Of the many changes they discuss the one they single out as the most important is the collapse of general education and distribution requirements: "The most important change was the virtual or complete abolition of fixed requirements in many departments and of mandatory distribution requirements, whether of breath or depth, including class attendance and the time, mode,

and kinds of credits needed to secure a baccalaureate degree." (Grant and Riesman, 1979, p. 188.)

The elimination of these and other requirements has resulted, they conclude, in giving students a truly remarkable amount of freedom of choice and autonomy within their college or university:

> Altogether, the result was a far greater degree of autonomy for the students. They were free to plan their course of study, or not to plan it. They could devise their own majors, delay such a decision, teach courses themselves for credit, and follow their inclinations at their own pace into various forms of "experimental" and off-campus learning. (Grant and Riesman, 1979, p. 189.)

As we shall see the increased curricular freedom and autonomy for students have had far reaching impacts on the nature of the college experience and what colleges require of students today.

Another book which I have found both informative and interesting, and one which substantiates and enhances much of what Grant and Riesman have to say is Arthur Levine's When Dreams and Heroes Died: A Portrait of Today's College Student. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980). Levine paints a disturbing picture of a self-centered, narcissistic college student, characterized by what he terms "meism," highly competitive, compelled by "vocomania," demonstrating little or no social consciousness or consideration for classmates, and totally pessimistic. Levine compares student behavior and attitudes as "travelling first class on the Titanic."

Alston Chase also sees our colleges as sinking, and he would complain we have already abandoned the ship leaving the children. In his book, Group Memory: A Guide to College and Student Survival in the 1980s, (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1980) Chase describes the bleak environment of today's college student and what he sees as the "degredation of student life today."

Lansing Lamont's book, Campus Shock: A Firsthand Report on College Life Today (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1979) reads like an expose and would probably cause any but the most irresponsible of parents to think twice before sending their children off to college today. Reading Lamont's book one gets the impression that neglect, alienation, sex, crime, cheating, sexism and racism are rampant on today's college campuses.

In my own work I have visited more than seventy campuses in the past four years and interviewed hundreds of students, and I have found some evidence to support some of what all of these researchers have found, but I have also found honest, responsible, serious, concerned, inquisitive students; living and learning on clean, safe, warm, friendly college campuses as well (of all the campus visits--many were at night, too--I made, I only felt threatened once) and it may be well to remember another of Grant and Riesman's findings: "One can still get a classical education in any good college or university if one looks for it, and catalogs show that much of the traditional remains." (Grant and Riesman, 1979, p. 179)

Nevertheless, it seems safe to say that all but a few of the institutions of higher education in our country are in trouble. All but a favored few are in financial trouble, beset by problems of declining enrollment, run-a-way inflation and declining levels of government assistance. It would be easy--in fact it is tempting--to be cynical and say that all that colleges require of students today is a warm body and a fat checkbook (these are actually two requirements). Instead, I will attempt to be objective, to adopt an institutional perspective and propose some tentative generalizations regarding what colleges require and expect of students.

What I will describe here could be called "college press" and the extent to which the student successfully meets this press may be called "student fit." The various characteristics that provide for student fit may be thought of as attributes. Student attributes include basic academic skills (reading and writing, etc.) as well as personality characteristics and other qualities. These attributes may be inherited or attained. Many of these attributes are learned (most, but not all in formal educational settings) while others may be attained through natural developmental growth and maturation. No attempt has been made to rank these attributes in importance or immediacy , nor have I attempted to quantify them. There is considerable and unavoidable overlap between many of these attributes, while others appear to be directly contradictory. One conclusion of this essay might be that college press is inherently contradictory and that student fit is impossible.

Academic Basic Skills

In a literal sense all of the attributes to be discussed in this essay are basic academic skills, but when most people speak of basic academic skills they think of reading, writing and mathematics. At the college level they probably would also expect students to need analytical thinking skills and an ability to interpret abstract ideas. It would be nice to think this is an accurate perception, but, in general, it does not seem to be true. When asked recently what skills colleges required of students, David Riesman said he thought assiduousness in attendance was all it took. He was serious. Indeed, a major finding of Grant and Riesman (1979) was

the collapse of general education and distribution requirements allowed all but those students majoring in hard sciences, mathematics and languages to avoid these more arduous courses.

The literature on college attrition investigates the relationship of academic characteristics and student persistence, but it throws little light on the topic of basic skills since it defines academic characteristics as grades or test scores and does not specify what skills are necessary for getting grades and scoring well.

In general it seems that colleges require little more than minimal reading, writing, and mathematical skills, and it may be that really only reading is absolutely essential in order to get by. As to the required level of performance for reading and other skills for college, there does not seem to be any agreement. Reading level equivalencies are statistical creations and not only differ but seldom seem to reflect reality.

In an engaging essay titled, "College Study: Expectations and Realities," Louis Benezet advised students that they will have to develop a detached academic outlook to make it through college:

> For the student to appreciate knowledge and truth as the professor sees it, it becomes necessary for the student also to detach himself from the biases and distractions of everyday existence. He does not realize for instance, until he proceeds well along in college that almost everything he has read in the daily papers and everything he hears at his family table at home reflects interpretations of truth tortured by self-interest, snap judgement and wishful thinking. The world of scholarship requires us to get away from the immediate scene. (Benezet, 1965, p. 9.)

Now this sounds good; here are analytical thinking skills, but unfortunately it is flawed and does not quite capture the reality of what students must do. Benezet's mistake is that he assumes that all

professors think in this objective, detached manner. Often college professors present a one-sided or narrow view of the "truth." There are some that feel it is their moral obligation to raise the level of consciousness of their students and intentionally present a slanted perspective, while others simply are not aware of their biases and how they may intrude in their teaching.

I would agree with Benezet that students need to think like their teachers, but they do not have to internalize their teacher's perspective, just give it back to them. Students have to figure out how their teachers think and what they want, and they must realize that different professors have different values and will think differently and want different things, and most important, will reward those students who can respond in accordance with the professor's values. Doing this may be particularly difficult for minority students and older students, any students for that matter, who have their own values and came to the university expecting something more from college professors. Another way of putting this might be to say that colleges require students to be "professor-wise" in the same way that students are described as being "test-wise."

As for colleges requiring students to enter into the world of abstract ideas, there does not seem to be anything inherent about the collective nature of these institutions that would require this. The part of the curriculum, the humanities, which would be most likely to involve or expose students to abstract thinking is generally in decline. Students don't seem to be too interested in abstract ideas in school; they want training; they want specific courses of study structured so

that they will lead directly into jobs after graduation. Arthur Levine calls this student preoccupation with getting job training "vocomania." The vocationalism of higher education is a frequent subject in the literature on colleges, and a Carnegie Council survey in 1976 reported that 85% of undergraduates were attending college with a specific career in mind. Almost half of all students reported that they would drop out of college if they thought it would not help in getting a job. Fifty-eight percent of all undergraduates were majoring in preprofessional studies.

Self-Sufficiency

Surely all of us can remember being warned in high school that when we got to college we would be on our own, that no one would be looking over our shoulder to make sure we got our homework done on time, or attended class, or studied, or learned anything for that matter. And how we looked forward to that happy day, only to find once it arrived how difficult it was to be on our own.

As discussed earlier in this essay, students today find themselves possessed of considerable autonomy from their colleges. A corollary of autonomy is self-sufficience and we can see colleges expecting students to be self-sufficient in a number of very significant areas.

The most elemental expectation colleges have of student self-sufficiency is that they will be able to manage their own time. This is more than expecting responsibility; it also includes expecting organization skills. The more free-time or unstructured time a person has the harder it seems to be for him to impose some structure and coherence. Scheduling and

organizing college study and work and personal activities is especially difficult for the beginning and inexperienced student who does not yet have an accurate conception of how much time certain school related tasks will take. Plus, there is this illusion of having "free time" since the class schedule only shows twelve to fifteen hours a week structured in class. At Miami University last year a group of 375 freshmen who had received less than a "C" average for their first semester were asked to rank sixty eight factors related to academic performance which might ex-;lain their low grades. "Failure to schedule time wisely" was ranked by thirty eight percent of the students as their principle problem--more than any other factor. (Hart and Keller, 1980)

Just as a schedule with too much freedom in it may make it more difficult for some students, too much structure--particularly in non-college related activities like work--can also create scheduling problems. Having less time for study makes the effective use of "free time" all the more important and no less difficult.

We can also find colleges expecting self-sufficiency from students in areas like self-advisement and independent study. In their description of New College Riesman and Grant speculate on the demands of independent study:

> But even now no generally applicable method is available by which to measure the personal qualities required for Independent Study--the stamina of the long distance runner or track star which enables students to endure frustration; the absence of narcissism which makes it possible to plow ahead with work that is not utterly dazzling; the ability to pace oneself when the hated monitoring of school and family is removed. (Grant and Riesman, 1979, p. 226)

An even more dramatic manifestation of expectations of self-sufficiency by colleges is found in the concept of self-instruction.

In addition to learning on their own, students are expected to teach themselves. Often self-instruction involves work with programmed texts, or tapes, or slide-tape combinations, or records or some other type of teaching machine, and much of this work is expected to take place in learning labs or independent study centers that are staffed by other students--not only is a teacher not directly involved, but they are not around either. Further expectations are put on students taking self-instruction courses since these courses also tend to be self-paced. A Carnegie Commission Survey of 1976 reported that one third of all undergraduates had taken self-instruction courses, and it has been estimated that soon the average undergraduate will take one third of all his courses through self-instruction.

One can only wonder about the cumulative impact of all these (and there are others) expectations of self-sufficiency on each student. I am reminded of an interview I had with a freshman student at a small technical institute where I was doing a study of student life. This institute does not refuse admission to interested students; instead they advise applicants of what the college thinks of the applicant's likelihood of success in what certainly is a demanding curriculum. The freshman, John, chose to be admitted even though the college officials had advised him that he would have difficulty. I interviewed John shortly after the end of his first semester. He had failed to complete three of four courses he took his first semester--calculus, physics and chemistry. All three of these courses were self-paced and involved the use of self-instruction video tapes at the learning center; there was no teacher. He had passed biology the only course he had with a live teacher, commenting, "I didn't like the

subject, but I did like the teacher." He explained that his big problem first semester was that he had put off taking the several mastery tests for his three self-study courses until the end of the term ("It was my own fault!") and then there had been a rush on the learning center by all the other students that had done the same thing, and John couldn't get his tests taken in time, and he had ended up with two incomplete and one failing grade. At the time into his second semester, John told me he was taking two of the courses over, and to my astonishment, he again was scheduled for three courses through the learning center. I asked him what his advisor had said about his schedule, and he told me that he had gone through self-advisement.

Sociability

Whatever else colleges may be, they are essentially social institutions composed of individuals and different groups of people (administrators, support staff, teachers and students) living and working in learning communities, and as such they impose on students a number of direct and indirect expectations for sociable behavior. Specifically, they expect students to be sociable with other students and with faculty. By sociable, for want of a better word, I simply mean being friendly or agreeable in company. Agreeable is the key word in my use of sociability.

There are a number of instances where colleges both expect and require sociable behavior among students, such as in sharing library or computer facilities, but it is in the realm of dorm and residential life that colleges exact the greatest demands of sociability. Students — often complete strangers at the start of the school year — are placed in the most intimate

proximity and are expected to share virtually every aspect of daily personal life. While getting along with one's roommate or roommates (as a freshman I had three roommates and we shared bathroom facilities with four other men, suite-mates) may be more difficult for inexperienced freshmen, and especially at first when no one knows anyone else, it can easily become more difficult as times passes, and behavior, attitudes, and opinions that were at first accepted as "different" or eccentric become less tolerable and serve as the basis for the growth of genuine animosity between students. It is just as easy for students to grow less accepting and accommodating of each other as it is for them to grow closer.

Althought there have always been difficulties and problems associated with dorm and residential life, there seems to be general concensus that two mroe recent developments have tended to make the situation more difficult. I am talking about the relaxation of parietal restrictions and the establishment of self-governing dorms.

According to Grant and Riesman, the dropping of parietal restrictions happened very quickly and reached every type of institution:

> With even greater speed than that with which students were gaining control over the curriculum, they were eliminating the last vestiges of parietal restraints on their conduct in non-academic arenas. It was really quite extra-ordinary to watch the wild fire spread of conviction on the part of college authorities, even in the more provincial and religiously dominated schools, that students were now adult enough to as the phrase goes, "take control of their own lives." (Grant and Riesman, p. 213.)

Most every account of college life today addresses the problems associated with the ending of parietal rules (Levine, 1980; Lamont, 1979; Chase, 1980) the most commonly mentioned, and most troublesome of

which seems to be "the third roommate:"

> The 'third roommate' has become a campus institution. This person is, of course, the guest--the roommates boy or girl friend--who stays for extended periods of time, sharing living quarters with his friend and roommate. Although all colleges officially frown on this, few stop it because, as short stays of lovers are permitted, it is impossible to enforce. Few students want to make enemies of their roommates by complaining, and a few of those who do complain are threatened with physical violence." (Chase, 1960, p. 144.)

Self-governing dorms, while fine in theory, simply do not seem to work. In the same way that self-regulation does not work to keep libraries quiet and make them workable places of study, it is my impression from talking to freshmen that self-regulated dorms are in a constant state of chaos. Of course, there may be and no doubt are exceptions, but it seems that placing students in group living and studying situations without any external form of control and authority to mediate interpersonal relationships only serves to place even greater demands for sociability on the part of students.

A second area in which colleges and universities expect sociability from students is in the realm of student-faculty relationships. While colleges most assuredly do not expect the same degree of sociability in student-faculty relationships that they do in student-to-student interactions, they do tend to expect the student to take the initiative in establishing some level of communication with faculty in less formal settings outside the classroom. At most colleges faculty are required to keep office hours, and there are some faculty that require students to make at least one visit to their office each term, but in most cases it is left to the student to establish this contact. This is, I think, asking a lot, particularly

of the freshman who usually has an exalted opinion of what college professors really are and who feels they must have a damn good reason to take up their office time. Yet, reviews of research on student attrition report that positive student-faculty interactions outside the classroom, and especially in informal settings, have a clear and definite correlation with student persistence in college. (Tinto, 1975; Baker and Siryk, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977; Pantages & Creedon, 1978)

Positive, informal interactions between students and faculty was found to be a critical variable in explaining the success of some students in community colleges, the institutions with the highest rates of attrition in our system of higher education. (Neumann & Riesman, 1980) While only a small portion of students who begin community college transfer programs actually graduate, an even smaller percentage make the transfer to four year institutions, and here again the variable of positive student-faculty interactions and relationships proved to be pivotal.

Beyond arriving at satisfactory living arrangements and establishing positive relationships with faculty, the ability of students to develop friendships with even small numbers of other students appears to be critical and may make the difference between persisting and leaving a school. This is true on large campuses where students may feel lost and alone or insignificant and forgotten and on small campuses with more homogeneous student bodies where being different even in some small way may isolate a student.

The fact that substantial numbers of students choose to leave college despite having acceptable and often excellent grades makes clear

that it takes more than academic skills to get through college. It has also been suggested that many students' poor grades are more accurately an indicator of difficulties in social skills than academic skills. Whether it is something about the nature of institutions of higher education or something in human nature, sociability seems to be a required basic skill for college.

Motivation

One of my most vivid college recollections is of a slight but very dignified and confident professor of English literature who, after passing out a forbidding reading list, told the somewhat abashed class of freshmen, "If you want to make it through my class you will have to want it, but just wanting it isn't enough. If you want to do well, you will have to like it!" While some people may argue about whether or not you have to like going to college,there seems to be general agreement that you do have to want to do it.

Two of the more comprehensive reviews on the literature on college persistence compiled by Iffert (1957) and Summerskill (1962) have documented that by far the most prominent reasons given by dropouts as prime factors in their decision to dropout are motivational. Motivation is a broad concept and can be defined in serveral different ways, and consequently researchers have investigated the question of the relationship of motivation and college persistence from almost every conceivable angle, looking at students precollege record of motivational commitment, various different sources of motivation, reasons for attending college, reasons for selecting

areas of study, goal commitment, institutional commitment, educational goals, occupational goals, career goals, development of goals, and the degree of clarity or specificity of goals, and although there is general agreement among them that motivational factors certainly do contribute to college attrition, it has not yet been determined which (if any) motivational factors are predictive or how they are to be measured. (Pantages & Creedon, 1978) But two things seem consistently to be true; first that a great many students who drop out of college report a lack of motivation either in college or their studies, and second, that the experience of going to college has had a negative effect on their motivation.

It seems really quite natural for colleges and universities to assume that students are motivated. After all, there are no compulsory attendance laws (at least not formally written ones) requiring college, and since students have to pay for college, it seems reasonable to expect them to want to be there. Students are in college of their own volition; they are there because they want to be , and anytime they want they can leave.

Colleges both expect and require motivation on the part of students in a number of ways. These expectations are reflected in the commonality of the structure of courses and teaching practises. While elementary and secondary school teachers expend great amounts of time and energy trying to find ways to interest students, to get them involved with their subjects, or, at the least to get students to do minimal amounts of work, college teachers (naturally, there are notable exceptions) generally do not worry about these things. For the most part, they take student interest for granted--this may be especially true of electives.

College faculty may feel a responsibility to teach, but they see the students' responsibility as being to learn and if necessary force themselves to get interested in a subject. This perception of the nature of the college teacher-student relationship is evident in the general tendency of most faculty to rely on the same method of instruction, the lecture.

The lecture remains the predominant teaching technique at all levels of college instruction. Lectures may be an efficient means of transmitting bodies of information to large groups of students, but there is ample reason to question whether it is the most effective means of teaching. Listening to lectures is basically a very passive experience, yet teachers expect students to be motivated enough to pay attention and take notes regardless of hom many lectures they have already heard that day. While there may be some variation between the lecturing styles of different faculty, each professor lectures consistently in his own fashion all term, and in the case of some sequential courses--all year.

In addition to most professors using the same method of instruction, college courses tend to be similar in structure. This is especially true of courses in the same subject area or department. There will be lectures, exams--often all scheduled for the same week--and term papers. Over the years it takes to complete all the necessary requirements for a college degree there is very little variation. Freshman courses are structured and run in much the same manner as advanced courses. More advanced courses may look at the subject in more detail, but they still tend to go about it in the same way. The whole process can and does become repetitious, routine, and monotonous, and no matter how bored the

student may become, they are expected to be motivated.

The bureaucratic nature of colleges also seems to expect and require motivation from students. Although it may be more pronounced and rigid at larger colleges and universities, there is a general impersonality implicit in administrative policies and a reliance on systematic procedures which are dehumanizing and often very frustrating for a student with a unique problem or even a common one. But colleges expect students to put up with bureaucracy, eventhough most of it is not designed to make life easier for the student, but rather to make things easier for the administrators. It's not hard to speculate on the cumulative effects of these bureaucratic frustrations on student motivation over the years. In a study I did of undergraduate life at one university freshmen talked about "learning the system" and juniors and seniors talked about "beating the system." Similarly, Levine noted that according to a Carnegie Council report in 1976, "...almost half (43 percent) of all undergraduates believe that many of the successful students at their college make it by 'beating the system,' rather than by studying." (Levine, 1980, p. 72.)

It all seems to come back to being motivated--whether it is to learn the system or to beat the system, to seek beauty and truth or to get a job and make money--students must be motivated to get through college.

Direction or Knowing What You Want

The "over-optioned curriculum" is a term coined by Gerald Grant to describe expansion of curriculia and the unbridled growth in the number of courses offered at most colleges and universities in recent years.

One doesn't have to look far to find this phenomenon. A recent add in a Boston newspaper announced that this Summer students at the University of Massachusetts in Boston would be able to select from five hundred courses representing fifty disciplines, and Grant (1979) tells of looking through a catalog for a large state university and finding more than seven thousand courses listed. For the undirected student with no core requirements or in many cases prerequisits for advanced courses required, with no clear idea of what they want to study, the experience can be bewildering. It's not hard to imagine (and I have known a good many) students spending years taking a mish-mash of courses scattered across the curricular spectrum, while making very little progress toward a specific degree.

Levine estimates that more than fifty percent of all undergraduates change their major at least once during college, and the number of course changes students make each term is astonishing. For example, according to Alston Chase (1980) at Yale where there are a mere fifty-nine major programs and five thousand undergraduates, there were over fifty thousand course changes during the 1978-79 academic year. Here are students in search of direction. Sociologist, Martin Trow places responsibility squarely on the colleges themselves for this situation, "Since colleges have abandoned responsibility for giving the curriculum any purpose or coherence, students must provide this purpose and coherence themselves."(Chase, 1980)

To be sure there are still academic advisors on college campuses, but student complaints about improper or inadequate advisement abound. Problems with advisement in large institutions are described by Gnepp, Keating

and Masters (1980):

> In large institutions, however, faculty advisors often find that they are responsible for a sizable number of undergraduates, and that many of their advising tasks are necessary but quite routine and time consuming. It is not surprising, therefore, that faculty members with extensive research and/or teaching interests are reluctant to spend time with students who want help filling out forms, need their advisor's signature for registration etc. This disinterest (occasionally bordering on antagonism) on the part of many faculty naturally affects the quality of the advisor/advisee interaction. A survey of advising in 1969 in the institute's collegiate unit revealed serious student dissatisfaction with faculty advisors and the advising system. Among the most frequent criticisms made by students were unavailability of advisors, lack of interest in students, lack of knowledge about the requirements and about referral sources, and advisors "too busy" to spend any time with them. (Gnepp, Keating, & Masters, 1980, p. 371.)

Similar problems with advising systems may also occur in smaller institutions. In my own research of undergraduate life at a technical institute I asked students who they went to for advice, and all but two respondents told me they went to fellow students before advisors. Three students I interviewed had not spoken to their advisors for over two years--required forms were signed by secretaries. In interviews I have conducted more recently with college dropouts, two recurrent themes have been the student's failure to decide exactly why they were in college or what they wanted to study and their failure to arrive at an effective working relationship with their advisor.

Empirical studies on the relationship between clear goals and college persistence tend to support the importance of having a clear idea of what you want out of college. Elton and Rose (1971) reported a major difference in the persistence rate of vocationally decided and undecided freshmen. They found that only seventeen percent of the undecided freshmen persisted to graduation while forty-three percent

of those who professed a career commitment graduated--even though the specific commitment may have undergone one or more changes. In another study Abel (1966) found that students were twice as likely to graduate if they were certain of their goals.

Financial Security

A friend of mine attending the University of Massachusetts at Boston recently received a bill from the university for 25¢. He could not believe it. The paper, postage and time and labor spent processing the bill and putting it into an envelope and sending it to him easily cost more than the original 25¢. The statement said the bill had to be paid by check. Even if he goes to the university office and pays the bill in person, saving the 20¢ postage, his bank will charge him 30¢ fee for processing the check. He was surprised and angry. I was amused but not surprised, after all, I've had years of experience at three different universities as a student. My friend, however, was a first term freshman, in college for the first time in his life. He said he thought the whole thing was stupid and that he was not going to pay it. I advised him to save the bill as a souvenir, but by all means to pay it, warning him that if he did not pay it the university might cancel his registration or charge him a late fee. There simply is no getting around financial requirements at colleges and universities.

The most immediate and pressing aspect of college is the cost, its financial requirements. Of course there are financial aid programs, scholarships, loans, work-study and the like (although these are reported

to be rapidly dwindling) but that aid goes right back to the university to pay your bills.

No matter how scholarly you are you must pay for your educatic.. It is steadily getting more expensive to get a college education, and the prospects are for increasing costs. In the introduction to the 1982 Peterson's Guide to Undergraduate Study (college costs begin even before college; this book cost $13. and then there are application fees for both admission and financial aid.) the prospective student is told: "As the cost of attending college continues to rise faster than most family incomes, and as previous government supports are being decrease., many students will automatically look for a college with low tuition or reluctantly decide not to attend college at all." (Peterson's Guide, 1981)

There are colleges, particularly community colleges, where the tuition is modest, but even in this sector costs are rising, and besides, there are a number of financial requirements pressing immediately after tuition is paid. The cost of books, for example, is a real burden for many students. And while you are a student you must maintain the rest of your living expenses, and quite simply when the cost of going to college becomes too pressing students leave college. In an interview with a counselor at an urban community college with predominantly low income and minority students the counselor told me that despite the fact that all the students received government aid that covered the full costs of the college, most of the students had to drop out because of pressing financial needs at home. They could not afford to take the time out of their work day that college required. Pantages and Creedon (1978) in their extensive review of attrition studies

concluded: "One of the most obvious causes of attrition is economic--students drop out if they cannot afford to continue in college." In 1976 the Carnegie Council survey reported that fifty-four percent of all college students were holding down jobs while going to school. Although there may be instances where the jobs are related to a student's studies and become an integral part of their education, and one could argue that working helps in the development of other attributes deemed necessary and desirable for success in college, in most cases having to work while going to school interfers with meeting basic course requirements and makes getting through college more difficult.

In addition to the obvious time (and in many cases material) limitations having to work places on a student, there are also psychological costs. It's difficult to concentrate on remote or academic issues while one is worrying about whether or not they can pay their rent or meet other basic living expenses. Financial press may also effectively isolate and alienate students who feel resentment towards classmates with greater financial resources. I still recall an interview I had with a young man, a senior at Stonehill College, who absolutely chilled me when he told me how he resented, even hated, his classmates who did not have to work outside of school. He hated them because they had more time to study and got A's when he got B's. He hated them most when they complained about home work assignments which he thought they had all the time in the world to do while he worked six nights a week just to get by.

The financial requirements colleges exact are immediate and can be severe. To respond most effectively to these pressures students need a little more than the absolute basics, they need financial security so they are not preoccupied with financial worries.

Conclusion

The American system of higher education may be characterized by its diversity. Because the many colleges and universities differ in several important ways, we may say with some confidence that the kinds of expectations and requirements they have for students may differ significantly. Nevertheless, I have made some general statements about commonalities in the nature of these different schools and their implications for students.

Colleges and universities in varying degrees expect and require students to demonstrate basic academic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. They must also learn how to adopt the professor's point of view. Schools have given students considerable autonomy, thus expecting students to be able to do a great deal for themselves ranging from the ability to manage their own time to essentially being able to learn on their own through self-instruction.

Students must establish genial living and working relationships with their peers, and they are expected to initiate informal contact with their professors.

Colleges and professors seem to assume a certain and sustaining degree of motivation on the part of students, and research indicates that students with clearly defined goals and a sense of direction are more likely to persist and complete a college degree.

Finally, it was stated that colleges and universities require students to pay for their education and that students will study most effectively if they have a sense of financial security.

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